

and so you would say of my design for the cupola, were I to show you my model: appoint me your architect, and it shall be done." They then felt that he was capable of the great enterprise, and although the malice and envy of rivals still strove to crush the daring innovator, he was appointed in 1420; and when he died, in 1444, it was carried up to the cupolino, which was subsequently completed agreeably to his design.*

Up to this moment the façade of the west end has remained incomplete, and it appears so to have continued until Sansovino, about 1514, by the desire of Leo X., erected a false elevation of wood. It consisted of a lofty basement, surrounded by coupled Corinthian columns, with niches and statues for the Apostles, surmounted by a pediment, and interspersed with pictures by Andrea del Sarto—a strange medley, totally at variance with the spirit of the design of the rest of the building. This temporary structure at length threatened decay, or the citizens became disgusted with it, for we find that in 1586 a certain Benedetto Ugguccioni, the chief officer of the fabric, ordered it to be taken down, under the reign of Cosmo de Medici. Towards the end of that century Luigi Agoli produced a design for the front, which was much approved. About a half century afterwards, or towards 1650, (Gherardo Silvani, a Florentine, designed another façade, which was approved but not executed.

On the occasion of the marriage of Ferdinando de Medici with a Bavarian princess, the whole of the west elevation was plastered over, and a scenic front painted by Bolognese artists, which still remains,—a shame to the city!

We may now consider the causes which contributed to the want of success in the able men who had devoted much time to give a fitting elevation to this noble building. Each one had mistaken the great principles which should guide an architect in the completion of a monument of art the production of another age, and having a distinct individuality of character of its own. If the great charm of an edifice of this sacred class be unity of conception, which should produce on the mind one continuous impression, free from those rude contrasts of feeling resulting from an incongruity of parts, the production of different epochs, with details of contradictory character, and as it were of contradictory sentiment, then it must be allowed that he alone rightly feels the subject who follows out the sentiment of the original type,—who imbues himself with the spirit of its general aspect and minuter decorations. It is true that the Gothic architects were not impressed with this conviction, and we find the additions to our cathedrals strongly contrasting with the original portions of the earlier epochs. This may produce picturesque, but in the educated mind there also arises a feeling of disappointment and dissatisfaction. So was it with Sansovino, Silvani, Pierratti, and the other artists who had given designs for this façade. They seem to have sought their own glory, not that of the building; they forgot the tribute due to the fame and the production of the original architect, Arnolfo, and thought only of themselves.

The Cavaliere Matas, however, of our day, has more judiciously and more generously entered into the spirit of the task he has undertaken. He has felt, and felt truly, that he had to combine the baptistery and the tower (now disconnected by the incongruous front); and by the adoption of the original style, to complete the grouping and the picture in one sentiment: he has gone back to the thirteenth century, and imbued himself with the spirit which guided the first conception of Arnolfo, and with a happy success has reconciled incongruities, giving a finishing touch to the side elevations, and rendered what is now poor and meagre a noble and dignified idea.

The view which is before us presents the elevation of the west front, with a lofty central gable end, formed by the continuation of the clerestory of the nave, flanked by boldly projecting square piers or buttresses. This forms the middle portion. On each side are wings rising to the height of the general cornice of the building, and level with the flat roof over the side aisles, thus producing three simple grand divisions for the elevation. Each division has its entrance-door, above which

rise the circular windows already existing in the present wall, and each of which is inclosed within a pointed arch. The doorways are of noble size, designed in the spirit of the ones on the side front by Arnolfo; and, in fact, the whole elevation is evidently a conception founded upon the proportions and details of the ancient doorways, modified as circumstances required.

But there is a departure,—or perhaps I should call it a carrying out,—of the original design, which gives animation and movement to the composition: it is that he has surmounted the angular square buttresses with noble niches or tabernacles, crowned by pinnacles, and has repeated them along the flanks of the building. This relieves the outline, hitherto tame, and gives variety to the grouping. The apex of the pediment is also terminated by a cross and group of angels, and the inclined cornice of the gable end is fringed with foliage, thus softening the hardness of the architectural lines. The faces of the buttresses are relieved by niches filled with statues.

By these modifications the Cavaliere Matas has most judiciously satisfied the requirements of the difficult programme. He has retained all the leading features of the original building, and restored its upshooting character. He continues the lines of the cornices, and repeats the divisions of the panelling; but, in addition to this, he has given greater projection to the angular buttresses, and by introducing the side doors in recesses, and by giving greater depth to the reveal of the central door, and the adoption of the tabernacular niches above the cornice, he superadds a spirited movement in the lines, and marks more decidedly their vertical tendency akin to that of the tower. He throws in a depth and variety of chiaroscuro, and accomplishes this with wonderful propriety, without departing from the individual character of the original.

The genius of Arnolfo is thus vindicated;—that which hitherto seemed an impossibility has been realized. The cathedral of Florence may be finished in a manner consistent with good taste and in harmony with itself. The magic group of the Duomo, the campanile, and baptistry are united by one sentiment. And if the Florentines be so fortunate as to see this design carried into effect, the Cavaliere Matas deserves the credit of having escaped the rock on which many able men have wrecked their reputation, and of having completed a monument which for five centuries remained unfinished, and this with a dignity and originality worthy the best times of Italian mediæval art.*

T. L. DONALDSON.

MONUMENT TO WASHINGTON AT NEW YORK.

On the 19th of last month thirty thousand persons assembled to witness the ceremony of laying the first stone of an enormous monument to Washington, in New York. The members of Congress, ministers of state, foreign ambassadors, and a triumphal car drawn by six white horses, containing a bust of the American hero, surrounded by thirteen young girls in white, to represent the thirteen original states, formed part of an immense procession to the site. The monument is commenced on elevated ground, and being intended to serve as a landmark for ships at sea, is proposed to be of very considerable height. The *New York Weekly Herald* gives a small view of it, showing it to be a tower in six stories, pretending to be Gothic in character, but, so far as we are able to judge, quite contrary to the principles of the style, ill proportioned, and, as might therefore be expected, abominably ugly.

Verticality is the distinguishing characteristic of pointed architecture, as horizontality is of classic architecture, and specially fits it for the production of towers and spires, which are scarcely consistent with the spirit of classic art, and can only be made endurable by the exercise of great skill,—such as was shown by Wren in his London churches. The architect of the Washington monument has entirely sacrificed the principle which so happily adapted the style to his purpose, and has piled story upon story, gradually decreasing in size,

and separated by hard horizontal lines, after the fashion of what is believed to have been the arrangement of the Tower of Babel, or a monstrous opera-glass pulled out to its furthest extent. It is much to be regretted that the large sum which this structure will necessarily cost should be thus wasted; and we venture to express a hope that the committee may see this remark in time to obtain a reconsideration of the design before it is carried out.

The "first stone" was a large block of granite, with a cavity formed in the middle of it, in which was placed a leaden coffer containing the current money, the act incorporating the society by whom the monument is to be erected, the journals of the day, &c., and the cavity was covered by an inscribed slab of marble. The inscription sets forth, amongst other things,—that "This section of the foundation was laid by the gratuitous contributions of materials and labour, by the following persons, viz.: the masonry by John T. Allen; the stone by Elisha S. Mott; the corner stone by Beals and Frazer; tablet by Joseph H. Barnes; the cement by J. P. and S. Cummings, Jun.; the lead box by Joseph Aken. The land conveyed to the association by the corporation of the city." Calvin Pollard, architect; Edwin Smith, surveyor.

Our authority says, that when the coffer had been deposited, a shower of money and bouquets rained in from the surrounding spectators, each anxious to make his offering to the memory of Washington. With so strong a temptation to dishonesty, it is to be feared that posterity would have found more had less been given.

In the first volume of *THE BUILDER* (p. 506), a view and description are given of Mr. Pollard's first design, which was in three stories, surmounted by a metal crocketed spire, the pinnacle of which was 425 feet from the ground. The plan was a pentagon 68 feet in diameter, with a rotunda inside, 40 feet in diameter, for statues of Washington and other great men. There was a projecting buttress at each angle, containing in each a room 22 feet by 19 feet, fitted up as a free library, to contain 400,000 volumes. There were apartments above for the study of the fine arts, and an astronomical observatory, and spaces for large numbers of pictures and statues. How much of the original design, in this respect, has been retained, we are not informed. The estimated cost of the work then, was 400,000 dollars.

SHALL THE INSTITUTE REPORT ON FOREIGN ARCHITECTS' DESIGNS?

SIR,—I must own myself surprised at the opinion you have given respecting the conduct of the Institute of British Architects, in proceeding to take into consideration the merits of the Signor Matas's design for completing the western façade of the cathedral at Florence. In this instance the author has forwarded a view of the project, and solicited the opinion of the members upon his idea. You object that that body should pronounce a judgment on the matter. If it be composed of men learned in the history of their art, versed in the principles of taste, and accustomed themselves to design and execute buildings, surely they are qualified to form a correct opinion; if so, why should they fear to give that opinion, or even to have it published before the world? You object to the precedent—I rejoice at it; for I think it highly honourable to the Institute that a foreign artist should send from the heart of Italy, to ascertain whether his professional brethren in England approve his design. I rejoice in the precedent; and do not think it a very dangerous one, for the completion of such an edifice does not occur more than once in a century. If the Institute be alarmed at giving an opinion, under the apprehension of arriving at an erroneous conclusion, or of offending the author, the members are unworthy of the high position they have assumed, as representing the profession in this country. If their opinion be favourable, it surely can be founded upon a matured judgment and justified before Europe. If not, it doubtless can be expressed in terms to carry at once conviction to the mind of the artist, and not unnecessarily wound his feelings.

You have yourself occasionally accused the Institute of not speaking decidedly upon certain mooted questions. The advice you give on this occasion is not likely to promote the

* Some of the details of this cathedral, and illustrations of the campanile of Uffizio, are well engraved in some recent numbers of the work now in course of publication, entitled, "Ancient and Modern Architecture."

* On some future occasion we may give the details of the dome the construction of which is singularly ingenious.